

Plaza Boulevard extension project moves ahead

by IDALITA RASO

MENTOR - The Plaza Boulevard Extension project is back on city council's agenda. Council authorized the city manager to purchase land that will allow the city to finish the project at its June 7 meeting.

The deal had been delayed since March while attorneys ironed out a more detailed legal description of the property to be acquired.

The city would purchase the right-of-way from PRISA III Legacy LLC for \$325,000 for .657 acres as part of the 1,500-foot Plaza Boulevard extension to be completed north of Route 20. Plaza eventually will intersect with St. Clair Avenue, providing a connection to Tyler Boulevard via Clover Avenue.

Total cost of the extension project is estimated at \$3.2 million.

Council also approved Community Development Block Grant allocations totaling \$158,691 to several public service agencies and a housing rehabilitation program for low- to moderate-income homeowners.

"Due to federal budget cuts, the amount received by the city is about 18 percent less than last year. We have about 75 people on a waiting list and the city is committed to helping fund as many of these people as we can," said City Manager Kenneth J. Filipiak.

The city has recommended to council that they allocate about \$105,000 of that for the Western Reserve Community Development Corporation, which helps rehabilitate low- and moderate-income houses.

A resolution in support of the Community Access Preservation (CAP) Act was approved. The CAP Act will provide modifications to state legislation and grant statewide franchises access to telecommunications providers and modify the Federal Telecommunications Act.

If passed, the act would make it so municipalities would not have to pay streaming fees to cable providers. According to the legislation, AT&T U-Verse has already forced the city to pay \$7,000 in streaming fees for

city a transmission fee but it could under the current law.

Flooding victims are still coming forward with complaints and dissatisfaction with the city's storm drainage system.

Resident Victor Ricci said he has experienced flooding twice; once in 2000 and most recently during the rain event on Feb. 28. He said both his garage and family room were flooded when the storm sewer backed up.

"I would expect reimbursement for my insurance deductible, but having been flooded twice, my insurance is now going to increase to 1 percent of the value of my home. This is not my fault," said Ricci.

He suggested enlarging the catch basin and decreasing the number of homes that tie into the storm sewer system as possible solutions.

Council President Robert Shiner promised Ricci the city will look into his particular situation, but admitted he was unaware of insurance deductibles increasing to 1 percent of the value of a home.

Long-time resident Herbert Hoffman, who lives next to Two Town Ditch, also stood before council with possible solutions.

"If you remove all obstructions, drop the creek to 106 feet above sea level and widen the outlet of the culvert this may help elevate the problem," Hoffman said.

Hoffman lives in Ward 3, the hardest hit area of the city to experience flooding.

Council approved an ordinance authorizing the city manager to enter into a contract with Sam Burger for concession services at the Civic Arena. Burger was one of 18 concession vendors to place a bid. According to Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities Director Robert Martin, Burger offered the best package - a three-year contract, with a two-year extension, healthier foods and great customer service.

Council approved an ordinance for two permanent cash transfers. The first was from the Court Special Projects Fund to the General Obligation Bond Retire Fund in order to retire an outstanding debt from the court reno-

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vation project. The second was for \$7,804.40 from the Tax Increment Financing (TIFT) Fund to cover interest payment on the Sterling Court Treasury Bond.

Council also authorized the city manager to enter into a contract with Reynolds John Deere Golf for the purchase of a John Deere 7500 Precision Cut fairway mower.

It's June, but the city is already looking into purchasing rock salt for the winter. Council approved an ordinance for the city to enter into a participation agreement with the Ohio Department of Transportation and other cities to lock in the best price.

Councilwoman Carolyn Bucey (Ward 2) asked if council could look into repairs for Ridgeway and Litchfield drives.

"The chip and seal has failed, especially at the stop sign," said Bucey.

Councilman Edward Walsh (Ward 3) also voiced his concerns about repairs that are needed on Munson Road.

Public Works Director Matt Schweikert said the state re-evaluated Munson Road and has placed it on the 2013 Paving Program, which will actually start the summer of 2012.

Councilwoman at Large Janet Dowling said adjustments were made to the boat launch ramp for senior citizens and wanted to know if signs had been posted.

Shiner said he had received a few phone calls asking for pickleball courts to be added at the recreation centers. Pickleball is a popular racquet sport in the south, which combines elements of

badminton, tennis, and table tennis. The net is similar to a tennis net, but is mounted two inches lower and is played with a hard paddle and a polymer Wiffle ball, making it more accessible to a wider range of players, particularly children and seniors.

Martin Spehar stood before council and announced he has five chickens at his residence on Hopkins Road. He further declared the city could not arrest him or put him in jail for having the fowl at his residence.

"I was made to believe the Codified Ordinance 505.13 section B and D are legal. In 2009 I gave up two hens, thinking I would be arrested," said Spehar. "Ohio laws clearly states what a municipality can and cannot take - you cannot take my firstborn, unless of course it is a chicken. The city of Mentor cannot force me to give up my chickens, nor put me in jail for owning them. I would like to publicly state that I have five chickens at my residence and you cannot arrest me."

Shiner told Spehar by his own admission he was in violation of the city ordinance and that he must give a statement to Police Chief Daniel Llewellyn and the police officer, who was present at the meeting.

In 2009 the city approved an ordinance stating that no person shall keep horses, goats, cows, chickens, sheep, mules, ducks, geese, turkeys or similar farm animals on premises of less than two acres. Violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor.

The next regular meeting of council will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 21.